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Historical Museums: Between Collective Memory and Politics of Historical Memory

Abstract: Memory, the politics of historical memory and historical museums have become popular in recent years, both in academic discourse and in public debate. This paper describes the role of historical museums in collective memory, and the way they are influenced by the politics of historical memory. It provides a definition, features and functions of collective memory, offers a categorization of memory vehicles, and discusses historical politics, indicating its positive and negative aspects. The section on historical museums reviews their importance for collective memory, their interrelations with historical politics, and their beginnings and current significance in Poland, and closes with an overview of recent major investments in historical museums in Poland.

Key words: historical museum, collective memory, vehicles of memory, politics of historical memory

In recent decades, memory has become a key term in many academic disciplines. In the 1980s,[1] the Western culture developed a particular interest in memory of the past in its national and regional, or more generally, communal dimension, giving rise to political discourse and extensive research in various human sciences from history through sociology, political science and anthropology to social psychology. It has been referred to as collective memory, social memory, historical memory, collective historical memory,

[1] The publication is based on the article: J. Klaś, *Muzea historyczne – pomiędzy pamięcią zbiorową a polityką pamięci historycznej*, *Zarządzanie w Kulturze* 2013, Vol. 14, No. 3, s. 197–215.

cultural memory, historical awareness, living history, tradition, remembering or memory of the past.[2] After the fall of communism in 1989, this global trend also reached Poland, where it focused on the experiences of the 20th century: WWII, the years of socialism, and the resulting relations with other nations, especially with Poland's neighbors.[3]

There are many reasons for this increased interest in the past and in remembering of the past but the most important appear to be: chronological remoteness of WWII; the end of the Cold War; unification of Europe with the subsequent shift in manifesting national feelings to sporting events and anniversary commemorations; and the conclusion of social, economic, moral and psychological transformations of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s that have had a tremendous impact on family and intergenerational relations and, in the process, on the transfer of memory, which resulted in attempts to restore the continuity of memory of the past and to protect material manifestations of that memory. In Central and Eastern Europe this was additionally catalyzed by abolishment of censorship. As for manifestations of this heightened interest in the past and remembering, they include: greater attention to issues concerning cultural heritage, including the most recent; disputes of historians about the painful immediate past and its ensuing review followed attentively by the general public and the media; popularity of history books, especially those that offer critical examination of national memories; creating television channels and magazines or newspaper supplements dedicated to history, airing anniversary programs on the radio; organizing historical reconstructions and re-enactments; proliferation of thematically and chronologically diver-

[2] The researchers who examined these issues, often considerably earlier than the 1980s, include first and foremost Maurice Halbwachs, Pierre Nora and Jan Assmann, and Polish researches of note include Nina Assorodobraj, Barbara Szacka and Andrzej Szpociński – cf. B. Szacka, *Czas przeszły, pamięć, mit*, Warszawa 2006, pp. 7–31; D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *Rewolucja w pamięci historycznej. Porównawcze studia nad praktykami manipulacji zbiorową pamięcią Polaków w czasach stalinowskich*, Kraków 2011, pp. 13–17; L.M. Nijakowski, *Polska polityka pamięci. Esej socjologiczny*, Warszawa 2008.

[3] B. Szacka, *Czas...*, pp. 9, 18, 32–41; *eadem*, "Pamięć społeczna," in: Z. Bokszański *et al.* (eds.), *Encyklopedia socjologii*, Vol. 3, Warszawa 2000, p. 52; K. Pomian, *Historia naukowa wobec pamięci*, Lublin 2006, p. 140; M. Saryusz-Wolska, "Wprowadzenie," in: M. Saryusz-Wolska (ed.), *Pamięć zbiorowa i kulturowa. Współczesna perspektywa niemiecka*, Kraków 2009, p. 7; P.T. Kwiatkowski, "Czy lata III Rzeczypospolitej były 'czasem pamięci'?," in: A. Szpociński (ed.), *Pamięć zbiorowa jako czynnik integracji i źródło konfliktów*, Warszawa 2009, p. 125; B. Korzeniewski, *Transformacja pamięci. Przewartościowania w pamięci przeszłości a wybrane aspekty funkcjonowania dyskursu publicznego o przeszłości w Polsce po 1989 r.*, Poznań 2010, p. 55; *idem*, "Medializacja i mediatyzacja pamięci – nośniki pamięci i ich rola w kształtowaniu pamięci przeszłości," *Kultura Współczesna* 2007, No. 3, pp. 7–8; D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, pp. 13–14.

sified monuments; and finally, creating an increasing number of museums, with special attention paid to historical ones.[4]

As a consequence of this discourse, a large number of terms, some of them already listed above, have been coined to refer to memory of the past in a collective sense. This terminological abundance is also reflected in numerous definitional approaches. It appears that the concept is best described by the following two positions. Barbara Szacka uses the term 'collective memory'[5] and defines it as:

> a set of ideas held by members of a community regarding their past, the figures that populate it and the events that happened in it, including the way of commemorating them and passing the knowledge about them considered to be an obligatory attribute of each member of that community.[6]

On the other hand, Dorota Malczewska-Pawelec and Tomasz Pawelec, referring to Barbara Szacka and Andrzej Szpociński, use the terms 'collective memory' and 'historical memory' interchangeably, and define them as "a set of beliefs and ideas about past events, figures and processes, including value judgments, shared by members of a community and carrying meaning that is essential for that community," and add that, "in other words, collective memory consists of beliefs included in particular subjects' individual memories precisely because these individuals belong to that community (holding these beliefs would therefore constitute a formative element of their role in the community)."[7] Owing to the nature of the discussed issues and in order to avoid terminological ambiguity, I will be using the terms 'historical collective memory' and 'collective memory' as synonymous and understood in line with the two generally coinciding definitions provided above.[8]

The term 'collective memory' is a certain metaphor. Memory refers here to the "knowledge" of the past: it informs people's own memory, organizes their experiences, and enables them to interpret the world around them. Thus memory is also a source of anthropological knowledge, being at the same time its subject matter and its instrument of cognition. However, human memory is always somebody's memory, i.e. it is a memory of an individual.

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[4] K. Pomian, *op. cit.*, pp. 140–142; B. Korzeniewski, *Transformacja...*, p. 55; J. Sadkiewicz, "Polityka historyczna w Polsce. Teoria – praktyka – dyskurs publiczny," *Culture Managemenet / Kulturamanagement / Zarządzanie Kulturą* 2009, No. 2.

[5] It must be noted, however, that Barbara Szacka decided on using the term 'collective memory' fairly recently, having previously used the term 'social memory' – cf. B. Szacka, *Pamięć...*, p. 52; *eadem*, *Czas...*, pp. 38–39.

[6] B. Szacka, *Czas...*, p. 19. Note: All citations from Polish literature used in this paper have been translated for the purposes of this publication.

[7] D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

[8] In this paper, I do not introduce a distinction between 'historical memory' and 'collective memory' made by Szacka in her work – cf. B. Szacka, *Czas...*, p. 39–40.

This "somebody" may be a "collective I" – a group of people spanning several generations, which imposes on its representatives an obligation to hold in their memory the recollections of the entire group. These chosen ones are entrusted with material objects from the past, and memorize stories about and locations of important events, passing them from one generation to the next. They engage other group members to take part in commemorative celebrations, thus making them, for the first or repeated time, the bearers of memory. Additionally, a significant part of individual memory's contents in large measure constitute a certain set of ideas about the group's past, relate to the experience of being a part of various communities, and are shared by all its members, while the contact with the past is possible only through categories and patterns specific to a collective formulation of a given culture. It follows, therefore, that collective memory is an inherent element of culture, and that culture is its manifestation. The history of culture is then the history of collective memory, with culture being understood here in its distributive aspect, as justified by the various ways of remembering and commemorating depending on locations and epochs. Therefore, people operate within 'memory communities' they co-create, where memory is not only individual but also collective.[9]

The key features of collective memory are:

- Dynamism – it is subjected to continuous influences, and as a result, to continuous change.
- Selectivity – it is impossible to remember everything, so items of historical knowledge are subject to selection made by historians and by senders and receivers of contents.
- Communicativeness – collective memory cannot exist without imparting information, in the process of interpersonal communication with the use of various means.
- Multiple sources – contents of collective memory originate from formal or informal sources (oral tradition of a family or relatives), and from other times or places.
- Autonomy – collective memory is independent of the past it refers to.[10]

As far as this last feature is concerned, what needs to be considered is the relation of collective memory to history, in a scientific and objective sense. Broadly speaking, there are two opposing positions on this. The first one sees

[9] B. Szacka, *Pamięć...*, p. 52; K. Pomian, *op. cit.*, p. 144, 148; J. Nowak, *Społeczne reguły pamiętania. Antropologia pamięci zbiorowej*, Kraków 2011, p. 28; M. Golka, *Pamięć społeczna i jej implanty*, Warszawa 2009, p. 72.

[10] D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, p. 15–16; B. Szacka, *Czas...*, pp. 28–29, 44; *eadem*, *Pamięć...*, p. 52; M. Golka, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

collective memory as deficient historical knowledge, and the other posits history as one of the forms of collective memory.[11] It seems, however, that mutual delimitation of these two terms is pointless, especially because they are closely interconnected and influence each other. For example, historical research is frequently inspired by collective memory, and conversely, collective memory cannot exist without historical knowledge, which is subordinated to the rules of memory, i.e. historical knowledge is used selectively to create images of the past, and then propagated in this form to satisfy societal needs.[12] In this process of transformation made by historians or other individuals, objective information is mythologized and subject to greater or lesser distortion: historical figures and events become unambiguous, one-dimensional symbols of the values important to a community, they are placed in a timeless ancient past rather than in a linear time, the quality of language changes from analytical and informative to poetical and metaphorical, and objective accounts become imbued with emotions.[13] In this way a historical canon forming the core of a given group's collective memory is created. Andrzej Szpociński defines this canon as "a collection of memory sites acknowledged by a given community" or "a basic system of elements to form a group's memory that is handed down within intergenerational tradition and is characterized by a sense of linearity of time."[14] The latter definition appears to be more precise (save the sense of time linearity which remains debatable) because it does not refer to sites of memory, which may, in popular understanding, be confused with sites of martyrdom, and which were defined by Szpociński as "proper names of objectified products of culture, names of historical events, and names of historical figures considered by members of a given group to carry some concealed meaning they find important."[15]

Collective memory involves various phenomena described by Bartosz Korzeniowski. The first is medialization of memory,[16] defined by the researcher as "the increasing significance of the media in interceding memory, i.e. the growing importance of mass communication media in shaping his-

[11] Zob. B. Szacka, *Czas...*, pp. 17–31.

[12] An opposing approach is isolationism of historical knowledge by restricting it solely to experts – B. Szacka, *Czas...*, p. 24.

[13] B. Szacka, *Czas...*, pp. 21, 23–24, 26; *eadem*, "Pamięć społeczna," p. 53.

[14] A. Szpociński, „Kanon historyczny. Pamięć zbiorowa a pamięć indywidualna. Trzy wymiary pamięci zbiorowej," *Studia Socjologiczne* 1983, No. 4, pp. 134–135; *idem*, *Przemiany obrazu przeszłości Polski. Analiza słuchowisk historycznych dla szkół podstawowych 1951–1984*, Warszawa 1989, pp. 11–28, [following:] D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, pp. 16–17.

[15] A. Szpociński, "Kanon...," [in:] D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, p. 17. More on sites of memory with broader definitions – cf. A. Kędziora, "Miejsca pamięci w zarządzaniu pamięcią o artyście," *Zarządzanie w Kulturze* 2012, No. 3, pp. 101–111.

[16] B. Korzeniowski actually uses the term 'medalization' but 'mediation' seems to be more appropriate etymologically and semantically in English.

torical awareness of modern societies," discussed in relation to the process of growing influence of the mass media on social awareness.[17] Korzeniowski makes a distinction between broadly and narrowly understood mediation. In its narrower sense, the term is congruous with the general definition provided above, and signifies "the growing impact of the mass media in mediating memory, where the mass media are understood as modern methods of communication."[18] In a broader sense, mediation is to be understood as "a phenomenon related to the influence of any media of memory on the image of the past,"[19] where, as stressed by the researcher, media do not refer exclusively to the modern media of mass communication, but also include the more traditional ones.[20] In this understanding, the focus is not on the 'media' as a system of modern mass communication, but on a 'medium', i.e. something that mediates. Korzeniowski proposes to term this wider sense 'mediatization' and use it when referring to the mediating process of a memory medium, and continue using the term 'mediation' to signify the increasing dependence of memory of the past on the mass media.[21]

Another phenomenon in operation within collective memory is universalization, which consists in an international community's adopting of historical events related to a specific national group as its own. Seemingly, this process also applies to smaller communities and to other elements of memory, such as historical figures. In such a case, universalization would involve one community adopting a part of collective memory of another community. The phenomena in character opposed to universalization are as follows: regionalization of memory, or an increased interest in local history and the history of minority groups, entailing a change of attitude towards that history; and pluralization of memory, understood as diversification of references to the past in the public discourse, and opening the official memory onto various perceptions of the past. The former initially involves "debunking" of memory, i.e. a tendency to uncover negative aspects from the group's past, e.g. injustices against minorities, and secondly privatization of memory, for which we cannot provide an unambiguous definition. I would describe it as misappropriation of a part or entire memory content by some community, and claiming the right to the only correct interpretation of that memory content. Somewhere on the borderline of collective memory there sits museumization of cultural landscape, which, according to Korzeniowski, manifests itself by renovation and protection of historical sites and the cultural scene. However, it

[17] B. Korzeniewski, *Transformacja...*, p. 61.

[18] *Ibid.*; B. Korzeniewski, *Medializacja...*, p. 9.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

[20] More on the media of collective historical memory further on in this article.

[21] More on these phenomena – cf. B. Korzeniewski, *Medializacja...*, pp. 5–23.

is possible to relate museumization to memory at large. This would consist in consolidating collective memory at its existing or desired level, especially by institutionalizing it (i.e. setting it within an institutional framework), and by taking particular care of the evidence of the past.[22]

A significant role in the phenomena being described is attributed to distortions of collective memory made by groups to enhance their image. Roy F. Baumeister and Stephen Hastings identify seven possible modifications:

1) selective omission of inconvenient elements of the past,
2) fabrication, i.e. claiming that something happened in the past when in fact it did not,
3) exaggeration and embellishment of minor facts,
4) attaching and detaching facts, i.e. casuality manipulation,
5) blaming enemies for one's own misdeeds,
6) attributing the blame to the circumstances, when other methods fail,
7) contextual framing through simplification of complex interrelations.[23]

Collective historical memory serves various functions in a society. Three of them appear to be primarily important. First, collective historical memory determines the identity of a given community and integrates the community within the sphere of ideas and values. The awareness of a common past is often the basic factor of group's bonding. This bonding is founded on the recognition of common fate, ancestors and existence in time. It is particularly important in national groups. Collective memory transforms events and figures from the past into symbolic signs, which together form a symbolic language that differentiates a group from others, and enables to identify people as insiders or outsiders. With time, this shared symbolic repository becomes the foundation of a community's system of meanings. Secondly, collective memory transfers norms, patterns and expected behaviors within a group. The contents cumulated within memory define the attitudes of community members, and their actions directed towards insiders and outsiders. This second function is sometimes regarded to be a part of the first one, thus it is alternatively seen to convey collective memory instead. The most significant examples of the latter are school education and education via other official media, but also conversations with close friends and family as well as nonverbal commemorative acts. Thirdly, collective memory legitimizes or delegitimizes legal validity of the authorities, and their new and existing structures and systems. Memory is therefore a significant tool of power and social

[22] More on these phenomena – cf. B. Korzeniewski, *Transformacja...* More on museamization and institutionalization – cf. A. Kędziora, *op. cit.*, pp. 106–107.

[23] B. Szacka, *Czas...*, pp. 29–30.

control, and can be used to influence the success or failure of political options or ideological programs.[24]

The relations of a community with its past are maintained by two complementing mechanisms: the psychological, related to remembering, experiencing and transferring contents of the past; and physical, which involves objects. As Marcin Kula writes: "The past is reflected... practically in each object or phenomenon that has lasted up to this day. As a consequence, virtually anything, at least potentially, is a vehicle of memory of the past."[25] This opinion leads to the conclusion that products of culture, but also features of nature, non-material elements, and people, can all be the vehicles of memory; however, they will all be perceived through culture, and so will remain the products of culture. The memory of the past resides precisely in these preserved cultural products because they invariably include symbolic aspects, and transmit past-related contents. A memory vehicle may also be referred to as a memory medium because each product of culture is a means of communication, both interpersonal and intergenerational (or inter-epochal). Cultural artifacts may be created to transfer symbolic meaning or they may be attributed this purpose secondarily when, as a result of changes in human experience associated with discovering a vehicle of memory or possible interpretation of it, an artifact acquires visibility and becomes used. Vehicles of memory are the basis for assigning meaning to the past, but they are ambiguous. Their import and importance change depending on time, place, cultural and political circumstances. This is especially apparent in emergency and breakthrough situations, when special actions need to be taken.[26] The contents carried by memory are also influenced by their owners and the roles of those owners. Finally, the contents may carry different meanings for different groups. Memory vehicles shape and feed collective memory, which, in turn, enables them to last.[27]

The complexity and multiplicity of memory vehicles makes it impossible to provide an exhaustive list. For this very reason, they also defy unambiguous categorization. Each attempt at dividing them is marred with the risk of overgeneralizations on the one hand and overspecifications on the other. However, it is possible to specify main categories of memory vehicles and to list those that are key for collective memory. A starting point for this could

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 47–66; E. Szacka, "Pamięć społeczna," pp. 54–55; J. Nowak, *op. cit.*, p. 128; D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, pp. 14, 18.

[25] M. Kula, *Nośniki pamięci historycznej*, Warszawa 2002, p. 8.

[26] More on memory vehicles during the Partitions of Poland – cf. L.M. Nijakowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–91. More on memory vehicles in the Second Republic of Poland – cf. *ibid.*, pp. 96–100; after 1989 – *ibid.*, pp. 124–138.

[27] M. Golka, *op. cit.*, pp. 68, 71–72, 119; J. Nowak, *op. cit.*, p. 128; B. Korzeniewski, *Medializacja...*, pp. 11, 15.

be categorizing memory vehicles in terms of the time of origin or operation, place of origin or operation, material or non-material quality, official or unofficial quality, or their owner. All the same, these categorization seem highly unsatisfactory. That is why I propose my own categorization of memory vehicles. While it is not perfect, as a single vehicle may be attributed to several categories, it seems reasonably balanced.

The vehicles of historical memory are:

- People – the most important vehicle of memory, without people the capability to preserve communal memory would be limited yet possible as it only takes one human being who retains the memory of the past, and then may potentially transfer it to other human beings, eventually preserving it, e.g. individual, community, nation, social group, cultural circle, civilization;
- People's activities – they are by themselves memorialization and, at the same time, they remind of collective memory's contents, e.g. formal anniversary celebrations, commemorative performances, plays, strikes, protests, demonstrations, pilgrimages, historic preservation, fashion, army enlistments, cult of the dead, scientific research, demolitions and erections of monuments, changes in school curricula, lustration,[28] appreciating and depreciating the significance of existing symbols, international negotiations, international treaties;
- Environments – they are memory vehicles in their own right, but they also accumulate products of the past, and voluntarily maintain the memory of the past by virtue of its importance to them, e.g. social classes and groups (aristocracy, peasantry, intellectuals, artists, scientists), royal families, the state and its institutions (the authorities, parliament, army, police), non-governmental organizations, companies and corporations, religions and denominations, education (universities and schools, including those abroad), the scout movement;
- Non-material vehicles – these carriers of memory are usually associated with the oral culture, where contents are transmitted by individuals (i.e. guardians of memory) with the spoken word, usually slightly modified on each occasion; if not given any material form, they disappear with the death of their last carrier, e.g. languages, myths, stories, genealogies, technical and practical knowledge, names, songs, ideas;
- Technical means of memorization – they make it possible to preserve a given community's memory without any contact with its members, and to transfer contents of that memory in time and in space; collec-

[28] A term used in Eastern Europe to refer to the purge of government officials once affiliated with the communist system.

tively or separately, they carry a direct meaning (what they are) and an indirect meaning (what they say about the methods and time of their creation, their features, communities that created them; they transfer memory of past events, situations and people, and describe the world as it was at a given time), e.g. writing in its various forms, musical notation, inscriptions, chronicles, print, books, documents, works of art, photos;

- Objects – these include mainly objects of everyday use, they carry symbolic meaning, evoke associations and express memory of the past, and are frequently created with these purposes in mind, e.g. reproductions, postcards, postage stamps, coins, costumes, orders and decorations;
- Space – it is being constructed from the entire set of memory vehicles, a collection of multiple elements which often integrates them into a single meaning; it is saturated with symbols and associations, very durable and unchanging by nature, and relatively resistant to damage and passage of time; it may be divided into public space and open space, e.g. buildings and arrangements of buildings, towns and cities, landscapes, architecture, urban structures, temples, monasteries, town halls, public offices, house and apartment interiors, monuments of heroes, leaders, saints, fictional characters, animals or ideas, plaques, cemeteries, gravestones, mausoleums, sarcophagi, shrines, roadside crosses, landscape architecture, memorials (martyrdom sites);
- Features of nature – they become elements of culture through an assignment of symbolical meaning or human transformation, e.g. forests, rocks, fields, meadows, mountains, landscapes, leather and antlers;
- Mass media – they give a sense of authenticity that may prove to be illusory; face a considerable risk of transposing memory beyond individuals; provide quick and easy access to contents, but usually fail to help understand or use them, e.g. the press, radio, television, the Internet;
- Institutions – they are specially established to create and collect material and non-material products of the past, and to preserve and protect memory; their interest resides with the contents desired by other entities but sometimes they also store objects by mere conviction that it is worthwhile to keep as many of them as possible as there is no way of knowing what will eventually be of value or use; their significance is highlighted by the fact that they are purposefully destroyed in wartime. Among them we can list: publishing companies, bookstores, libraries, archives, museums, movie theaters; and in Poland: the Institute of National Remembrance, the Council for the Protection of Struggle and Martyrdom Sites, the Office for War Veterans and Vic-

tims of Oppression, in-service teacher training centers, the National Broadcasting Council.[29]

A special role within the realm of various memory vessels is attributed to museums. Among them, by virtue of the nature and subject matter of their collections, historical museums are especially significant places. According to Zdzisław Żygulski Jr, historical museums constitute a separate category, nevertheless elements of historism can also be found in art museums as they present the history of art, and historical museums nearly always use pieces of art to illustrate the olden times. It seems reasonable, therefore, to extend this category to other types of museums. It is hardly debatable that a number of other museums also present history, and these include: archaeological museums (prehistory), ethnographic museums (history of the countryside and indigenous peoples), science and technology museums (history of science and technology) or, indeed, natural history museums. As claimed by Żygulski Jr, the difference between art museums and historical museums, which I subsequently project onto this more extensive category of museums, lies in their diverse roles, objectives and methods. However, the researcher does not explain what this diversification precisely involves, and only specifies in passing that the objective of a historical museum is to present a delimited historical past by means of objects collected.[30] It seems that, in a natural course of museology's evolution, art, archaeological, ethnographic, science and technology, and natural history museums have become seemingly more independent history-wise by specializing in particular domains and focusing less on presenting historical continuity or specific elements of the past. This diversification of history-related museums is therefore more than evident, especially so when one realizes that historical museums themselves do not form a homogeneous category. Moreover, all these museums may be further diversified based on their scope of activity into: museums of world, national or country-specific history; museums of city or regional history; museums devoted to history of events, organizations or ideas (e.g. political or religious); martyrdom museums; military museums; university museums; biographical museums; museums devoted to history of various fields of art (e.g. literature, theater, music, photography and cinematography); and entertainment and sport history museums.[31] This rather wide category of historical museums I propose comprises at least several museum types regarded by the Central

[29] More on memory vehicles and their examples – cf. M. Kula, *op. cit.*; M. Golka, *op. cit.*, pp. 67–119; L.M. Nijakowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 76–91, 96–100, 124–138.

[30] Z. Żygulski Jr, *Muzea na świecie. Wstęp do muzealnictwa*, Warszawa 1982, pp. 98–102.

[31] This categorisation largely coincides with the categorisation proposed by Zdzisław Żygulski Jr – cf. Z. Żygulski Jr, *Muzea...*, pp. 98–102.

Statistical Office of Poland (CSO) to be separate, non-historical museums.[32] It helps resolve, at least to some extent, the problem of overlapping museum categories. Based on the above, I consider a historical museum to be a type of museum which uses memory vehicles it collects to present a portion of historical past about the world, nations, countries, regions, cities, events, organizations, ideas, martyrdom, the military, education, outstanding figures, and developments in the fields of art, entertainment and sport.

Approximately since the end of the 20th century, historical museums have been an important contributor to transmitting, maintaining and molding collective memory of various societies by conveying the image of the past and popularizing historical knowledge in the mediated process between historians' research and collective memory. Specializing in storing and sharing collective memory, historical museums are among the institutions selected by communities to evidence the course of history, and its values and beliefs, which often have a decisive impact on collective memory and the perception of the past. In a sense, historical museums symbolize collective memory at large. They are vehicles of memory which also safeguard other vehicles, thus enabling them to be preserved more efficiently than other existing forms. Historical museums preserve memory in a selective and idealized way, and at the same time act as guardians of the society's official memory, continually promoting a debate about the past, occasionally giving rise to controversy in the media and in the society. Museum exhibitions produce a special type of historical narrative as they present and explain the history but also communicate something about the present, namely the community's prevailing way of remembering and thinking about the past. They form a setting where the official version of a group's past is confronted with the individual experiences and memory of its members, and they demonstrate collective historical memory of a community while providing one of the few possible forms of expressing group identity. They belong to the symbolic domain of a given community, and, in exceptional circumstances, may be a manifestation and a means of symbolic violence towards others. Their social impact is usually broad and its scope substantially exceeds that of the collected cultural artifacts.[33]

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[32] More on types of museums as categorized by the Central Statistical Office of Poland – cf. *K-02 Sprawozdanie z działalności muzeum i instytucji paramuzealnej*, http://stat.gov.pl [accessed on: 12 April 2013]; "Tabl. 1(196). Muzea," in: *Kultura w 2011 r.*, Warszawa 2012, http://stat.gov.pl [accessed on: 12 April 2013].

[33] M. Golka, *op. cit.*, pp. 103–113; J. Nowak, *op. cit.*, pp. 32, 128–130; B. Korzeniewski, "Wystawy historyczne jako nośnik pamięci na przykładzie wystawy o zbrodniach Wehrmachtu," *Kultura Współczesna* 2007, No. 3, pp. 68–84; K. Pomian, *op. cit.*, p. 148; S. Mocek, *Pamięć i zapominanie, Kulturowe i społeczne funkcje muzeów*, in: D. Folga-Januszewska, B. Gutowski (eds.), *Ekonomia muzeum*, Kraków–Warszawa 2011, p. 170; J. Sadkiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 282–288.

Owing to its role in legitimizing and delegitimizing authorities, collective memory may be shaped, or even created, in a conscious, purposeful and methodical way, a capacity frequently employed by historical museums. The contents of collective memory are subjected to constant selection, interpretation and reinterpretation in line with the strategies of a given community's political culture. This gives rise to social activity which involves institutionalized remembering and forgetting. However, the manipulation of memory is not the exclusive domain of those in power. Other entities use it too, including institutions, intellectuals and leaders representing groups that seek prestige and improvement of their social standing. These various bodies trying to reinforce the interpretation of the past that suits them most are called 'memory actors.' Their activity in the sphere of collective memory is aimed to point to the enemies of their community, mitigate collective inferiority complexes, raise the group's spirits, or expunge all inconvenient facts from its history. Because every community comprises of many diverse entities that can potentially differ in their perception of the past, in each society there arises a natural dispute about what and how to remember. Such disputes may vary in openness and intensity. In essence, they are not concerned so much with the past as with the present, and dwell on such issues as nature of the community, principles of self-determination, desired qualities and behaviors, or legitimacy of power. A frequent claim to appear in this context is that history is ancillary with respect to collective memory.[34]

A particularly important memory actor seem to be the authorities, or more precisely, the institutions they represent. It is the ruling, especially in undemocratic countries, who, owing to their status and available tools, are most capable of taking actions that shape collective memory. These endeavors undertaken by the authorities as regards collective remembering have various names and definitions.[35] They are frequently referred to jointly as the 'politics of memory,' but in Polish literature a direct translation of the German term *Geschichtspolitik*, i.e. 'historical politics' is usually used.[36] It tends to be popularly understood as "a political use of memory."[37] Using this term carries a number of negative connotations. Worse still, it seemingly divests the concept of some of its positive aspects, while promoting its colloquial nature. Moreover, as emphasized by Dorota Malczewska-Pawelec and Tomasz Pawelec, the term 'historical politics' is not precise: what is at stake here is

[34] J. Nowak, *op. cit.*, pp. 128, 137; B. Szacka, "Pamięć społeczna," pp. 52–53; D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

[35] On the lack of a clear definition – cf. L.M. Nijakowski, *op. cit.*, p. 41–48.

[36] D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, p. 18; L.M. Nijakowski, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

[37] J. Tokarska-Bakir, *Nędza polityki historycznej*, in: P. Kosiewski (ed.), *Pamięć jako przedmiot władzy*, Warszawa 2008, s. 27.

not merely the past as it was (after all, it cannot be changed in a literal sense), but what the community will remember of the past and how. Therefore, they propose using the term 'politics of historical memory' and define it as "efforts made by representatives of the authority to intentionally model collective historical memory, and exert control over it; in other words, to govern it with the aim of attaining some ideological or political objectives (usually related to the broadly understood legitimation of power, and social order advanced by that power)." The researchers also add that "in practice, these efforts take the form of intentional creation, transformation and deconstruction of particular sites of memory."[38] I agree with the argumentation of Malczewska-Pawelec and Pawelec in favor of the term 'politics of historical memory,' and I will be using it hereinafter, but I also consider their definition to be too narrow as it is restricted solely to the negative aspects of the approach and fails to acknowledge the positive ones, which without doubt also exist. Owing to this incompleteness of perspective, I prefer to understand politics of historical memory in accordance with Jacek Nowak, who defines it as "planned endeavors of the community's elite and institutions, aimed to select the contents of and to construct a narrative about the past that are handed down both within and beyond the group, and thus build a coherent identity discourse."[39]

As indicated in the preliminary definitional considerations above, historical memory has two aspects, positive and negative, and they inform the two attitudes towards it: skeptical and enthusiastic. The opponents, not without reason, are afraid of the past being manipulated with political intent, and of the consequences this may have. Their list of risks associated with it includes: depositing the exclusive right to interpret history with selected people and institutions, objectifying the past as well as reducing it to a version that best suits the line of current authorities, falsification of history, exclusion of various minority communities, building social divides as well as a tight, and closed community, negative impact on foreign policy and reconciliation, destruction of minority groups' memory and omission of historical micro-narratives, building a community's identity solely on prevailing beliefs, and driving nationalism and self-worship. Politics of historical memory is also criticized for its lack of self-criticism, as well as general anachronism and backwardness. Its further disadvantages include using it as a form of political marketing aimed to win voters, as well as popular associations with propaganda techniques, especially totalitarian, and other manipulations similar to those used at the time of the Polish People's Republic. On the other hand, the proponents of the politics of historical memory stress that a modern state must adopt and develop such policy as it is necessary to preserve and nur-

[38] D. Malczewska-Pawelec, T. Pawelec, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

[39] J. Nowak, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

ture tradition, culture and national heritage, propagate history, build identity, create a good international image, and to indicate symbolical boundaries, based on the interpretation of history and heritage, for community members to follow and sustain. They suggest that appreciating the essential country-binding factor, namely the achievements of past generations, respecting the country's tradition and history while adapting them to the requirements of the 21st century, or promoting public discourse in order to expand citizens' historical awareness are simple necessities. The enthusiasts of the politics of historical memory also indicate its favorable impact on performance and stability of a democracy, the attainment of which requires the political system to be firmly founded on the nation's culture and tradition, and its historical achievements. Finally, they consider it essential in responding to undesirable interpretations of the past that is shared with other countries, and to the activities of these countries in this regard (for Poland, this particularly includes Germany and Russia).[40]

Both these opposing stands seem too radical, and require a middle ground. It is obvious that the governing party will always be trying to dominate the politics of historical memory as it offers using a way of the past to exercise power.[41] As for power, it is nearly always related to a community, and can be used to rule over it and manage it against the will and interests of its members. However, it appears that in the context of a democratic country, freedom of speech, along with the incomparably smaller scope of instruments than those available to an authoritarian or totalitarian country, it is impossible for the authorities to fully impose its own interpretation of the past.[42] The mere fact that there exist natural conflicts as to the form of politics of historical memory, whether opponents can voice their concerns, or the current authority actually expects a discourse to be held so that they can capitalize on it by focusing on the otherness of their competitors' views testifies to the poignant differences in operation of authoritarian or totalitarian countries and modern democracies. Having acknowledged this, actions taken by a democratic state must still be controlled by independent overseers, e.g. researchers, private institutions and non-governmental organizations, which need to be able to provide their own narratives, with state-run institutions remaining in the forefront.

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[40] J. Sadkiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 277–278; J. Nowak, *op. cit.*, pp. 137–138.

[41] Cf. P. Kosiewski (ed.), *Pamięć jako przedmiot władzy*; M.A. Cichocki, *Władza i pamięć. O politycznej funkcji historii*, Kraków 2005.

[42] It is impossible for the authorities to completely control the interpretation of the past even in undemocratic countries. Frequently, their inhabitants show mistrust for the official message, so it is not included in collective memory, and alternative verbal and non-verbal messages are circulated – B. Szacka, *Czas...*, pp. 60–63.

According to Lech Nijakowski, maintaining the dominance of the state in his respect can be compared to a man, who, without continuous work on the preservation and protection of his memory, would cease to exist. Nations behave in analogous ways – lacking this mechanism they break down into local communities without sustaining unity. Collective memory, as a bulwark of communal identity, requires a continuous process of remembering, forgetting and recollecting facts either in unconscious or planned ways. The intentional part of the process, which to a large extent is the politics of historical memory concerned with communities rather than individuals, is an inherent feature of a contemporary state and reinforces the identity of its citizens. As proposed by Jan Sadkiewicz, managing a state corresponds to managing a company, in that the latter aims to integrate employees and make them identify with the enterprise. The way this is achieved with citizens within a state depends on that state and its culture, but it is usually based on recounting glorious events, exposing past atrocities, establishing tradition, denoting enemies and demonizing strangers. Within this understanding of the politics of historical memory, it carries the officially transmitted image of the past, and counts among the three elements that influence collective memory, the other two being memory of individuals with their own experiences, and collective memory derived from personal experiences common to many individuals. A state should pursue this policy in conformity with the democracy and civil society standards of, ensuring that independent initiatives enjoy operational freedom and providing them the support they need.[43]

Politics of historical memory is related to the public history movement that emerged in the United States and which advocated introducing professional history into public life through various initiatives, including museums and commemorative exhibitions. Museum institutions, beside school education and commemorative celebrations, are among the key areas of state's involvement in politics of historical memory,[44] which in Poland largely fall within the scope of activity of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage.[45] In

[43] J. Nowak, *op. cit.*, s. 137–138; L.M. Nijakowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 18–19, 29; B. Szacka, *Czas...*, pp. 44–45; J. Sadkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

[44] It could clearly be seen in the first decade of the 21st century Poland, when commemorative celebrations of the 60th anniversary of the Warsaw Uprising were held, changes in curricula were introduced, and new museums were established (the Warsaw Rising Museum, and the Polish History Museum), and attest to the rise of the "new politics of memory" in Poland which started in 2004 – cf. B. Korzeniewski, *Transformacje...*, pp. 177–231; J. Kurski, "Wprowadzenie," in: *Pamięć jako przedmiot władzy*, pp. 7–8. More on discussions held in Poland at that time – cf. A. Panecka (eds.), *Polityka historyczna. Historycy, politycy, prasa*, Warszawa 2005; R. Kostro, T. Merta (eds.), *Pamięć i odpowiedzialność*, Kraków–Wrocław 2005.

[45] More on activities of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage within politics of historical memory – cf. J. Sadkiewicz, *op. cit.*, pp. 280–286.

this context, it is worth considering the relationships between the politics of historical memory and cultural policy, the latter being defined as "conscious management of public interests in [the cultural sector], and making decisions about issues related to cultural development of a society."[46] Opinions in this respect are divided: some see politics of historical memory to be subordinate to cultural policy, others consider it to be the opposite, and others still indicate that the politics of historical memory is simply an element of cultural policy, along with many other areas of state's activity. However, as politics of historical memory is implemented mainly by cultural institutions, falls within the responsibility of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, and is related to identity as well as to material and non-material cultural heritage, it is reasonable to consider it an element of state's cultural policy. Moreover, in case of Poland, this point of view is represented in the Constitution (in the Preamble and in Articles 5 and 6).[47]

It should be noted that the origins of Polish museology as such are closely tied to both historical museology and politics of historical memory. The principal idea of Izabela Czartoryska, a Polish aristocrat and the founder of Poland's first museum, was to safeguard the evidence of Poland's former greatness, and to use them to present the Polish history from the olden days up to her times. Her museum in Puławy is therefore also considered to be Poland's first historical museum. Referring to the activities of Izabela Czartoryska, Żygulski Jr writes that "the past needed to be embellished and refined by presenting ancient treasures and trophies because the form of the past informs the future of a nation."[48] It is thus safe to claim that the museum in Puławy was a carefully devised tool with politics of historical memory at play. However, it was not designed and delivered with funding from the Polish government, which simply did not exist at the time, but by a joint effort of Poland's various social classes. Czartoryska's enterprise, while utterly romantic and humanistic, also represented a specific political agenda and influenced the formation of national awareness. All these factors together proved to have a significant impact on Poland's restoration of independence.[49]

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[46] M. Dragićević-Šešić, B. Stojković, *Kultura: zarządzanie, animacja, marketing*, transl. J. Ambroziak, Warszawa 2010, p. 29. More definitions of cultural policy – cf. S. Dragojević, "Definicje polityki kulturalnej," *Culture Management / Kulturmanagement / Zarządzanie Kulturą* 2008, No. 1, pp. 248–256.

[47] B. Szacka, *Czas...*, p. 22; B. Korzeniewski, *Wystawy...*, pp. 68–69; J. Sadkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p. 279; *Konstytucja Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej z dnia 2 kwietnia 1997 r.* (J. of L. NO 78, item 483 as amended).

[48] Z. Żygulski Jr., *Muzea na świecie...*, p. 57.

[49] Z. Żygulski Jr, *Dzieje zbiorów Puławskich. Świątynia Sybilli i Dom Gotycki*, Kraków 2009, pp. 19, 53, 58.

Poland's museology of today is also based in large measure on historical museums, and this, coupled with a significantly greater number of public museums than private ones,[50] may testify to a strong interest of the authorities in supporting these particular institutions. According to the Central Statistical Office of Poland (GUS) data, there are 133 historical museums that collectively form the second largest group of museums in Poland, the largest being art museums. However, when the definition of a historical museum I proposed above is applied, this number is augmented with other museum categories considered separate in the GUS typology. These include biographical museums, martyrdom museums, military museums or the most numerous of these, regional museums. They amount to a total of nearly half the number of all museums in Poland. Historical museums are also the largest group among the museums run by the local authorities in Poland, with the total of 100 museums operated by communes, districts or provinces. In other charts, historical museums usually rank second or third, despite the fact that the narrower GUS typology is used. For example, in 2011 historical museums ranked second in number of visitors (5.1 million) and in number of exhibits (1.5 million); third in number of exhibitions organized in Poland (541) and in number of completed research programs (85); and first in number of exhibitions organized abroad (39).[51]

The importance and great potential of historical museums is also reflected in the investments made, usually on the initiative or with the support of local or government authorities, in museum facilities and innovative permanent exhibitions, which usually are narrative and interactive in character, appeal to senses and provoke emotions. From the museums that have recently been established, expanded with new buildings or had their existing buildings revamped, historical museums are the most numerous. This tendency includes all types of museums: from museums run by governmental institutions and local authorities, to museums operated jointly within larger organizational structures and independent museums, to museums of regional and national reach and those with impact in European countries and regions. The beginnings of this trend can be traced back to 2004 when the Warsaw Rising Museum was opened, and the decision to build the Polish History Museum in Warsaw was made. In the following years, several other initiatives were

[50] Based on the CSO data, as at December 31, 2011 there were 682 pubic-sector museums and 95 private-sector museums operating in Poland – "Tabl. 1(196). Muzea." Based on data of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, as at April 19, 2013 there were 335 museums active in the public sector, and 149 in the private sector – "Rejestry, ewidencje, archiwa, wykazy," *Departament Dziedzictwa Kulturowego*, http://bip.mkidn.gov.pl [accessed on: 18 April 2013].

[51] *Kultura w 2011 r*; *Działalność instytucji kultury w Polsce w 2011 r.*, http://stat.gov.pl [accessed on: 20 April 2013].

launched across Poland. Museums of a country-wide theme include the Fryderyk Chopin Museum, which opened in Warsaw on the 200th anniversary of Fryderyk Chopin's birthday, and operates within the Fryderyk Chopin Institute,[52] as well as the Museum of the History of Polish Jews, which was launched on the 70th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising as a cultural institution set up jointly by the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the City of Warsaw, and the Association of the Jewish Historical Institute of Poland. Additionally, the Polish Army Museum is currently being constructed. The European Solidarity Centre in Gdańsk, a new dimension in Polish museology delivered in cooperative effort of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the City of Gdańsk, the Pomerania Province, the Solidarity Centre Foundation, and the Independent Self-Governing Trade Union "Solidarity", ran a permanent exhibition in 2014, but is not a museum according to a legal definition of such. In 2012, a permanent exhibition was opened in the Home Army Museum (Muzeum Armii Krajowej) in Kraków, In Memoriam of General Emil Fieldorf "Nil", which is run by the City of Kraków and Małopolska Province. After numerous problems have been resolved, the Museum of the People's Republic of Poland, located at the former "Svetovid" Cinema in Kraków's communist purposely-built steel-mill district of Nowa Huta, is expected to reopen as a communal cultural institution and not as a branch of the Polish History Museum.[53] A separate group of new historical museums are the museums of martyrdom. In the recent years, new facilities and exhibitions were delivered, e.g. the Museum – Palmiry Memorial Site (a branch of the Museum of Warsaw) and Museum – Bełżec Memorial Site.[54] As far as regionally themed museums are concerned, Kraków is a pioneer in both: launching the new ones and staging historical exhibitions. In the past few years, the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków earned two new facilities housing permanent exhibitions: Oskar Schindler's Enamel Factory ("Kraków under Nazi Occupation 1939–1945")[55] and Rynek Underground ("Following the traces of European Identity of Kraków"). A number of other exhibitions have been revamped, including "People of Kraków in Times of Terror 1939–1945–1956" (Pomorska Street) and "Tadeusz Pankiewicz's Pharmacy in Kraków Ghetto" (the Eagle Pharmacy). In addition, a new theater-themed

[52] More on the Fryderyk Chopin's Museum – cf. M. Janicki (ed.), *Muzeum Chopina*, Warszawa 2011.

[53] R. Kozik, *Kraków stworzy własne Muzeum PRL-u, dotychczasowe zniknie*, http://gazeta.pl [accessed on: 22 April 2013].

[54] More on historical expositions about the Holocaust – cf. A. Ziębińska-Witek, *Historia w muzeach. Studium ekspozycji Holokaustu*, Lublin 2011.

[55] More on the exhibition in Oskar Schindler's Enamel Museum – cf. *Kraków – czas okupacji, 1939–1945*, Kraków 2010.

exhibition is planned in the Cross House.[56] The Warsaw's Praga Museum is being built in the capital city of Poland to complement the Museum of Warsaw. Nearby Kraków the John Paul II Family Home Museum was opened in 2014 in Wadowice in a joint undertaking of the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Wadowice Commune and the Archdiocese of Kraków, and the new home of the Silesian Museum in Katowice will host a permanent exhibition called "The History of Upper Silesia".[57] The above list is not exhaustive and provides only a selection of the newly opened and recently revamped institutions.

Historical museums play a special role for collective memory as they not only protect memory vehicles, but are memory vehicles themselves. Owing to these museums, collective memory, idealized though it may be, is effectively preserved, maintained, shaped and transmitted. Historical exhibitions help to explain the past and provide a setting where it can be confronted, and they also express group identity and have an impact on society. Unwittingly and inevitably, historical museums become a tool used in politics of historical memory which, for its part and despite possible misuse by the authorities, should be seen as a positive and beneficial complement to the cultural policy of the state. The disposition of historical museums in Poland, placed somewhere between acting for the benefit of collective memory and being acted upon by decision-makers, has been the staple of Polish museology from its very beginnings, as evidenced in the activities of Izabela Czartoryska, whose aim was to cherish the memory of the nation and to embellish it a little. In present-day Poland, there is a surge in historical museology, evident both in statistical data and in infrastructure investments. A considerable interest of the public, high number of museums, exhibits and projects, and modern infrastructure offer great potential which should be well realized. This is to be done by building a positive attitude towards the past and reinforcing the society's identity, and by no means may this involve falsification of the historical truth. Any activities of the state that are within the boundaries of its constitu-

[56] More on the theater-themed exhibition planned – cf. *Muzeum Historyczne Miasta Krakowa. Nowe Muzeum Teatralne*, Kraków 2011.

[57] For detailed information about the museums mentioned, and the respective investments and exhibitions – see the following websites [accessed on: 22 April 2013]: *The Warsaw Rising Museum*, http://www.1944.pl/en; *The Polish History Museum*, http://www.en.muzhp.pl; *The Fryderyk Chopin Museum*, http://chopin.museum/en; *The Museum of the History of Polish Jews*, http://www.jewishmuseum.org.pl/en; *The Polish Army Museum*, http://muzeumwp.pl; *The European Solidarity Centre*, http://ecs.gda.pl; *The Home Army Museum*, http://www.muzeum-ak.pl/english/; *Museum – Palmiry Memorial Site*, http://palmiry.mhw.pl; *Museum – Bełżec Memorial Site*, http://belzec.eu; *The Historical Museum of the City of Kraków*, http://mhk.pl; *The Warsaw's Praga Museum*, http://muzeumpragi.pl; *The John Paul II Family Home Museum*, http://www.domjp2.pl/; *The Silesian Museum*, http://www.muzeumslaskie.pl/en.

tional duties and the adopted cultural policy should not provoke indignation but rather be seen as an opportunity to further develop institutions, educate the public, and build positive attitude towards one's region and the entire country.

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